

'The Bay of Pigs'

A New Focus Makes Many Nervous: What Was the CIA's Invasion Role?

WASHINGTON, D.C.

People will be asking questions about the abortive and humiliating attempt to invade Cuba in 1961 for years to come. But never will they ask so many questions in so short a time as they did last week.

Among the principal questions were these:

✓ Did the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) give the Cuban invaders explicit instruction to defy the President of the United States in case he decided to call off the invasion?

✓ Who was responsible for the failure to inform the insurgents of an "alternative" battle plan that might have saved thousands of lives?

✓ Was the battle plan, drawn up by the CIA and approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, based on fatally defective intelligence data?

✓ Who was responsible for the grievous underestimate of Fidel Castro's ability to repel the invasion?

Big Howl and Swift Denials

These and other questions were raised not by a full-scale Congressional inquiry—although one may someday occur—but by a book. Written by newsman Haynes Johnson of the Washington Star in collabo-

ration with the four Cuban commanders of Assault Brigade 2506, the book (*The Bay of Pigs*; Norton; 368 pages; \$5.95) is still a week away from official publication. But already it has revived the entire controversy over who was, or wasn't, responsible for the debacle.

The question that caused the biggest howl, and provoked the swiftest denials, was the report that the CIA told the insurgents to go ahead with the attack even if President Kennedy ordered a last-minute cancellation.

The four Cuban commanders whose testimony forms the basis of Mr. Johnson's account—Manuel Artime, Jose Perez San Roman, Erneido Oliva, and Enrique Ruiz-Williams—charged that a CIA agent in charge of training the assault brigade told them on the eve of the invasion that there was reason to believe the President might cancel the attack, and if that occurred the Cubans were to make "prisoners" of the CIA agents and proceed with the invasion anyway.

Attempts to Debunk the Book

In Washington, already nervous about the semi-autonomous powers of the CIA, the commanders' charge caused a stir. Newsmen who had received advance copies of the book hastened to their typewriters and, just as quickly, top officials of the CIA hurried to their telephones to try to stop, or at least rebut, the charge that they had deliberately defied their own President.

The usual policy of the CIA in situations of this kind—e.g., the allegation that it helped overthrow the Diem regime in Vietnam—is to say nothing. And anyone who called the CIA last week got the usual "no comment." But privately the CIA view was well expressed by one official: "The story is not impossible. But it simply does not make any sense."

As the Cuban leaders tell it, "Pepe" San Roman and Oliva were summoned to a secret briefing shortly before their departure from the CIA training base in Guatemala to a forward invasion staging area. They were quietly given instruction by a CIA agent, familiar to both but known only as "Frank." The two Cubans recalled that Frank complained about "forces in the Administration trying to block the invasion," and said if he received such an order, he would secretly inform Pepe and Oliva.

New Attacks Expected

Attacks by anti-Castro Cubans on Communist Cuba are likely soon.

Spokesmen for various exile groups in the United States were unanimous last week in predicting commando assaults soon on Cuban soil. They said such attacks before May 20—Cuba's independence anniversary—appear all but certain.

Significantly, various cities with large exile populations reported the disappearance of groups of young men during recent weeks.

Exile sources say that small-scale attacks from anti-Communist groups within Cuba and outside would be directed at harassing Fidel Castro's dictatorship. They said sabotage, infiltration, commando, and guerrilla operations were contemplated. "What we hope to do," says one exile, "is to drive Castro and his Communist cohorts crazy and out of power."

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